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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 003652

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, USUN FOR JESSICA LAPENN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/14/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#) [KUWAIT](#) [IRAO](#) [RELATIONS](#)

SUBJECT: ONGOING BORDER DISPUTE: AP ARTICLE CAUSES  
CONTROVERSY

REF: A. KUWAIT 3565

[B](#). KUWAIT 3523

[C](#). KUWAIT 3446

[D](#). KUWAIT 3396

[E](#). KUWAIT 3331 (NOTAL)

[F](#). KUWAIT 3287 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (U) A previously unknown Iraqi Shi'a group, calling itself Islamic Jihad, threatened to "attack (Kuwaiti) border posts, border patrols and carry out attacks inside Kuwait," if Kuwaiti troops did not pull back to the "pre-1991 border," an AP article reported August 14. Kuwaiti Arabic and English-language newspapers picked up the article and published it prominently on August 15 under the headline, "Iraqi Militants Threaten Kuwait." These new threats are part of a series of confrontations over the Kuwait-Iraq border (refuels). With tensions already high, this new menace is sure to anger many Kuwaitis and may undermine the GOK's attempt to downplay the border dispute.

[2](#). (C) The article itself may be a source of contention. Written by Iraqi AP correspondent Abbas Fayadh, who is also the Basra director of U.S.-funded television station Al-Iraqiya, the article stated that the UN "redrew" the border in 1993, the "upshot (of which) was that Kuwait received 11 oil wells, some farms and an old naval base that used to be in Iraq." The author failed to mention that Kuwait considers the oil wells as part of Kuwaiti territory, and that efforts were made to compensate Iraqi farmers for land lost since 1993. According to GOK officials, Iraqi farmers were not allowed to accept compensation under Saddam's rule; however, discussions about compensation recently resumed.

[3](#). (U) Note: The current Kuwait-Iraq border was officially demarcated by UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 833 in May 1993. At that time, the UN installed concrete pillars to mark the exact location of the border. Since the exact border only existed on paper prior to UNSCR 833, the physical demarcation of the border divided a number of farms straddling both sides of the border. Although both sides made compromises, many Iraqis, particularly those who "lost" land, felt cheated by the demarcation and have disputed the border ever since. Therefore, the exact location of the pre-1991 border referred to by the Shi'a group is uncertain. In actuality, the pre-1991 border, based on a line established by the British and the Turks in 1913, was agreed upon by Iraq and Kuwait in 1932 and renewed in 1963 in a document entitled "Agreed Minutes Between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq Regarding the Restoration of Friendly Relations, Recognition, and Related Matters." UNSCR 687 contains a detailed history of the border dispute. End note.

[4](#). (C) Comment: GOK contacts insist that the border dispute between Kuwait and Iraq is a localized phenomenon. The recent ITG delegation visit demonstrated Iraqi PM Ibrahim Al-Jaafari's interest in resolving the issue diplomatically (ref A and B); however, these new threats underscore the fact that Baghdad may have difficulty controlling the various groups in southern Iraq. Elements in both Iraq and Kuwait are likely to continue to politicize the border issue in order to further their own agendas. While not reaching crisis dimensions, we assess that additional border confrontations are probable in the near future. So far there have been no serious injuries or deaths, and Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials seem to agree on the sanctity of the UN demarcated border and the need to de-escalate. However, an incident resulting in Kuwaiti casualties or provocative large scale demonstrations could send the Kuwaitis to the Security Council for support. End Comment.

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